

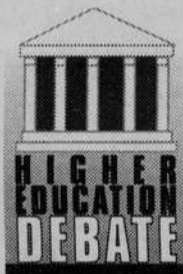
Affirmative action for the 21st century



SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

More than 35 years after the first executive order on affirmative action was issued, the time has passed to define what equal opportunity does and should mean in the 21st century. More specifically, affirmative action in higher education is going through a defining transition that will cast its future role in America.



With the great advancements made by all minorities and the female majority, affirmative action is in a position to take the next big step toward providing equality for every citizen. However, with a vague synopsis of what affirmative action actually means, and what it can accomplish, it also stands at the edge of a steep cliff, threatening to fall into obscurity.

When President Richard Nixon issued White House Executive Order 11246 in 1965 (later amended), he made the first bold step in the past 50 years toward providing

equal opportunity in the workplace. That order issued a mandate that employers monitor their hiring of individuals from target groups (e.g., women) to find if it reflected the availability of talent in the community. Needless to say, the results were not as promising as one would hope. To say that no progress has been made is as dangerous as to say that the need for more change has passed. Racial, cultural and religious minorities, gays, women, the disabled and the mentally ill have all seen their causes improve dramatically, especially in the past 10 years. However, progress does not equate to equality.

The next stage of affirmative action must be enacted to provide access to higher education for the poor and disabled. While current law allows preferred treatment for minorities to higher education, it is only addressing part of the problem.

Let's say 60 percent of African-Americans fall into the poverty gap. If we pass a law that gives preferred treatment to all African-Americans, then we will likely help those 60 percent who exist in poverty, but we are also providing economic assistance and preference to those who are not necessarily in need.

We should have an affirmative action system that opens doors for all citizens trapped in economic hardship. It doesn't matter what color your skin is, what your gender is, who you prefer to sleep with or what god you choose to worship. If you don't have the financial resources to provide for yourself, you are not going to suc-

ceed. Affirmative action based on economic need, combined with strictly enforced equal opportunity, would help all citizens in need.

Marketability is the greatest motivation for equal rights. Look no further than your Thursday night network programming for proof. Television producers didn't suddenly develop a conscience and decide it would be a good idea to start making some shows with gay and lesbian characters. Instead, what they found was that there is a responsive market for that type of programming, or as Nixon's executive order decreed, "a target group for available talent in the community." By providing an equal economic playing field for those with the ambition to succeed, we can gain the extra inches needed to overcome the hurdle of diversity still lagging in our society.

Ask any member of the Islamic Five Percent Nation, an offshoot of the Black Muslim Nation of Islam, and they will tell you an army of educated men is a force to be reckoned with. There are many avenues of untapped potential that can be used in accomplishing this goal. Provide more money for government programs like AmeriCorps, which offer tuition assistance in return for community service. Also, don't ignore the effectiveness of organizations that have already made significant contributions to higher education, such as the armed services. Finally, instead of making it a fight between the public and private sectors, reach further into community resources like faith-based organi-

zations so they can do a better job of helping their communities.

While it may be politically sexy to play the blame game, this won't get us anywhere as citizens. A poor, sick and hungry white kid suffers the same pain and humiliation as a poor Latino kid. Believe me, I've lived on that side of the tracks. When the left tells you that your problems don't count because you're part of the "ruling elite," it makes the emotional scars run that much deeper. Likewise, when the right tells a poor minority to simply try harder, they tear a great fissure in the cultural divide that cannot be easily healed.

In the end, we need a clear objective for overcoming the problems of racism, sexism and poverty. I suggest that the most effective way of accomplishing this is by strict enforcement of equal employment laws already on the books, and by providing economic assistance to all of the ambitious poor.

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Bryan Dixon Emerald

It's 50 years late, but we must apologize for No Gun Ri



CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

It was a mystery that had lain undisturbed in plain sight for 50 years. 1950: The South Korean and American armies on the Korean Peninsula were in full retreat. North Korean army troops had hounded them to a 100-mile pocket centered around the port city of Pusan. Both Americans and South Koreans were paranoid, following reports of Communist troops dressing in peasant clothing and hiding within the refugees fleeing south in order to create havoc.

On July 26, this paranoia came to a head. Six hundred villagers, evacuated from areas

near the front, were stopped near a railroad crossing at a place called No Gun Ri. The civilians were searched. Though no weapons or other incriminating evidence was found, the 600 were slaughtered in air and ground attacks.

For 50 years, this story of a massacre of friendly civilians would lay buried and unknown to the general populations of either America or South Korea. It would not become public knowledge until 2000, when the Associated Press, during a routing retrospective of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War, began interviewing troops who claimed to have witnessed the massacre.

Now, with the discovery of distinctively American bullets embedded in the railroad bridge at No Gun Ri, we know that the United States Army was involved. For 15 months, the Army has steadfastly denied any culpability in the killings. But with irrefutable evidence presented, the Army has

admitted our troops were involved. Admission is only part of the process, though. Our president has still to make a formal apology to the families of the victims.

"What befell civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in late July 1950 was a tragic and deeply regrettable accompaniment to a war forced upon unprepared U.S. and Republic of Korea forces," is how the formal report, freshly released by the Department of the Army, describes the event. This is not an apology. At best, it is an admission of guilt.

We, as a country, must apologize for this act. Whether this takes the form of a formal speech or a monument or reparations, something must occur. We committed a grievous wrong at No Gun Ri, one for which we must atone.

A trial for those involved in the action, sadly, is out of the question. Many of those involved at captain rank or higher have already passed on. Arresting individual soldiers for the shootings would be a daunting

prospect. Perhaps they could be arrested and tried, but to what end? Those who admitted to having been there have shown that they are haunted by the actions.

The Army as a whole is not like those at No Gun Ri who let their emotion and paranoia run wild. As a whole, the Army is professional and disciplined. Yet by obfuscating and denying and being forced, "Perry Mason"-style, to finally admit wrongdoing, the Army's leadership gives the appearance that they condone this action and that they have other skeletons to hide. What of depleted uranium bullets and their health effects? What of the Gulf War syndrome? These are problems the Army doesn't want to face. But like No Gun Ri, it must face them, and soon.

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Letters to the editor

Confronted together

Heather Mitchell claimed Tuesday ("Pro-life ad propaganda skewed scientific truth," ODE, Feb. 6) that the Human Life Alliance's insert had a "lack of integrity" and "tabloid-style rhetoric." I concede that some of the insert's arguments are easily contested. It is good to expose rhetoric, but it's ironic that her editorial was dominated by rhetoric as well.

Little more than a third of her argument gave me any reason as to why I should side with a pro-choice position. This is not a personal attack on Heather Mitchell, but an attempt to expose how crafty rhetoric is littering the debates in our culture.

Take the often-used term "anti-choice." This label is given to those who hold a "pro-life" viewpoint. It doesn't accurately describe the pro-life position. Pro-life obviously means "for" the life of the fetus/baby — not "anti-abortion" or worse, "anti-choice." Pro-lifers would not object to a method of

terminating a pregnancy (abortion) that kept the fetus alive.

These labels are used to sway an impulsive audience before reason even enters the dialogue by appealing to our distaste for oppression. It is easy to slip into the rhetoric wars.

Slowly, perhaps too slowly, I am becoming more intellectually honest and less defensive. We are a culture quickly losing our intellect and our soul. We are confronted together with the issue of abortion. As a culture committed to virtue and community,

what will we do about this issue?

Mike Alverts
Eugene

CORRECTION

Yesterday's guest commentary ("Money down the drain," ODE, Feb. 6) incorrectly stated that the College Democrats are funded with incidental fees. According to Lauren Manes of the College Democrats, the group has never accepted student incidental fee money nor will they in the future.